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SUBJECT: DUSD LAWLESS CALLS ON SUH CHOO-SUK AT NSC

Classified By: POL M/C Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: In a March 20 meeting, DUSD Richard Lawless told NSC Assistant Secretary General for Strategy Suh Choo-suk that the "LaPorte Plan" proposed to the ROKG in January represented an equitable, reasonable, and final offer to the ROK on environmental remediation. Deferring to MOE to provide a formal response at SPI the following day, Suh indicated that domestic political dynamics made it difficult for the ROKG to accept the U.S. proposal. Lawless informed Suh that both sides had made progress on the Joint Vision Study and the Command Relation Study. However, on the Comprehensive Security Assessment (CSA), the ROK and the U.S. still had many issues to resolve. He proposed drafting a "CSA-lite" or cancel the CSA altogether if an agreement could not be reached. When pressed for a quick approval on the Strategic Guidance Statement (SGS) for OPLAN 5029, Suh asked for more time. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S) DUSD Richard Lawless met March 20 with NSC Assistant Secretary General for Strategy Suh Choo-suk to discuss

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alliance issues in advance of the SPI talks the following day.

LaPorte Plan and Environmental Remediation  
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¶3. (S) Lawless stated that the U.S. had been trying to return closed USFK bases to the ROK for the past year and a half. Currently, there were 24 camps ready to be returned to the ROK. Lawless was concerned that if an agreement on a process to promptly return the closed bases to the ROK did not move forward, the timeline for the important base realignment programs would be derailed. He stated he was worried the US could be criticized for not returning the closed camps and reiterated that the U.S. was firmly committed to Yongsan and LPP relocation plans and wanted to return the bases on an expedited schedule. However, to date no progress had been made on the return of the closed bases, some of which had been closed as long as 17 months. Lawless stressed that the U.S. had been trying to find a solution on the issue of environmental remediation, worried that this could become a bilateral political issue. The LaPorte Plan, proposed by outgoing USFK Commander General LaPorte, included provisions to take special measures on 5 out of the 24 bases, which were found to have contaminants floating on ground water. Lawless emphasized that GEN LaPorte believed he had an agreement with the Minister of Environment on this proposal, and that this was the best and final U.S. proposal. Lawless urged the ROKG to accept the plan.

14. (S) Suh said he had studied the LaPorte proposal and shared the U.S. concerns on the matter. However, he was mindful of the overall political situation within the ROK and the overall policy direction of the ROKG. Downplaying NSC's role, he deflected responsibility to the Ministry of Environment (MOE) stating that MOE had the lead on this issue. Suh noted that, as in the U.S., environmentalists sought to impose their standards on the government, and there were those in the National Assembly who agreed with the environmental NGO's. Taking into consideration these views, the ROK interagency had prepared a proposal to be presented at SPI. Although the proposal may fail to meet expectations from the U.S., Suh stressed the need to keep working on this issue. The NSC Permanent Council, with the Defense Minister's lead, would continue to focus on this issue.

CSA, JVS, and CRS  
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15. (S) On the three alliance related studies, Lawless noted that the Comprehensive Security Assessment still had significant issues to be resolved, most notably the treatment of Japan. He emphasized that the ROK's language on Japan was something that the U.S. could not accept in the document. Discussions in Guam indicated that the two sides were actually getting further apart. Since CSA sets the necessary foundation for the other studies, he hoped that the CSA could be completed as soon as possible. If both sides could not reach an acceptable solution, he proposed that the CSA be released as a less comprehensive and complicated "CSA-lite". If even that approach could not work, the two sides should consider canceling the CSA altogether. In response, Suh said that threat assessments were already included in the Joint Vision Study (JVS) and questioned the practical utility of the CSA. He thought that a truncated CSA was a good idea. Suh commented that Assistant Minister of Defense for Policy Planning Kwon An-do, who would head the ROK delegation for SPI, would concur with his views. Suh emphasized that CSA-lite should still reflect the common understanding of the ROK-U.S. alliance and not focus on the disagreements between the two partners.

16. (S) Turning to the Joint Vision Study (JVS), Lawless pointed out that both sides were making good progress and that the study would significantly impact the alliance. On Command Relations Study, Lawless said he hoped to finalize a timeline on command relations by the October Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) in Washington. He pressed Suh to make progress on signing a Terms of Reference (TOR) on command relations. Suh pledged that the NSC would cooperate fully on such issues of bilateral importance.

SGS and 5029  
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17. (S) Lawless commented that the U.S. had met ROK's requirements in the Strategic Guidance Statement (SGS) and was waiting for ROK's approval. He inquired if any outstanding issues remained which prevented the ROK from approving the draft. Lawless noted that SGS had been in the works since 2003 and that both sides needed to move forward on this for the sake of the alliance. While delegating the primary responsibility over the matter to the Combined Forces Command (CFC) and the ROK JCS/MND, Suh said that President Roh was committed to resolving issues regarding the alliance. However, the internal government deliberations had become convoluted and the negative reaction by the public had complicated matters. The President and the policy makers were committed to a thorough process on these discussions in the spirit of the alliance, Suh said.

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